【CHAPTER3】

I'm thinking of taking the imperial military examination.
...
I've come to understand something.
A Zhen raised by humans can only have an unfortunate fate
...
!
...
You'll no longer be a Zhen master?!

*The examination taken to become a military officer during the Imperial China period.

Zff
Zff
...
No.
Not if it possesses beauty
Such beauty that shall silence all protestations.
Such beauty that shall engrave everlasting regret in whosoever ends its life.
...Such beauty!
...
Thus
Brother mine

In this land
I want to create
The most beautiful Zhen
Before the end of my life...
As a Zhen master ...
Just one more time...I
CLENCH...!
...
Never again will I

I swear!
Never again
-raise another Zhen.
FLT!
啾
啾
啾~♫
THP!
啊!

WFF
SEEMS HIS CONDITION HAS BEEN RESTORED
HMM... THOSE COLOURS LOOK... RATHER UNSETTLING.
WFF
WFF
아파...
Just like
A rain-bow.
The shades of one hundred poisons.
They are ...

My brother's Zhen.
... This is
PF PF P...
Seems like the Grand Marshal wants to show you off today too...
KON KON!
He's rather whimsical.
KLAK
SA! SA!
It's time.
Come down.

I'm just following their practice.
SCHLAF
If you don't like it you'll just have to get used to it.
ANNOYED...
Hey.
Why do I have to be in those even when we go out?
Ran never shackled me, you know?
Hmph!
The men here always ignore me no matter how much I call.
And when they finally come, they come with whips and shackles hidden in their 'hands'.
Cowards.
It's only natural.
Do you expect them to go against you unarmed?
Rubbish ...
Ran never once-

FLT
You, who killed him!
...
Do you have any right to complain?
...
uh
...

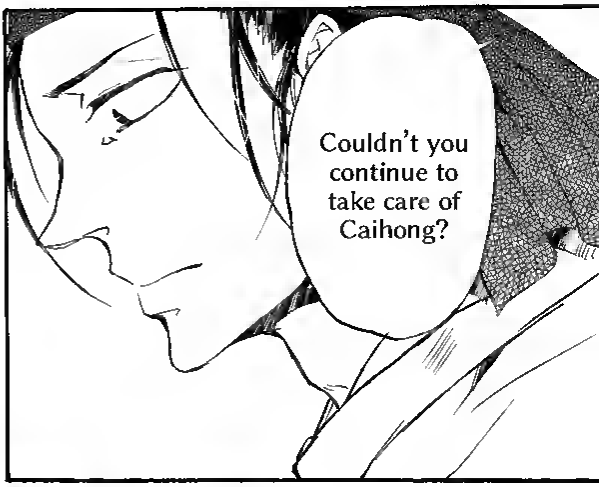
Ran is gone.
...In any case
Stop saying wilful things.
WSHI
Living here is your only option now.
KRE AK...
He's still an excellent Zhen master.
As expected of Fei-dono!
But man, did my blood run cold for a moment there.
You know, that Zhen is currently ranked the most beautiful.

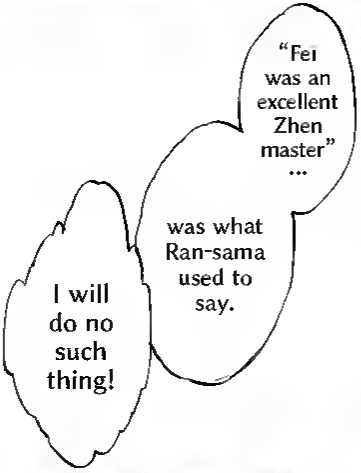
Lately, the unrest at the border is heating up.
Enough about that. Can you take care of Caihong for now?
SCH-LAK
I simply replicated my brother's prescription.
It's not like I did anything special.
And you're still so modest.
START!
Right
I'll leave the rest to you.
RUSTLE...

Sorry for leaving all the housework to you.
It's alright, I'm free anyway.
It's fine, I'm used to it.
Are you worried about him?
...
Erm ...
Uh Aah..
W-WELL ...I-
IF THE SUBJECT MAKES YOU FEEL UNCOM-FORTABLE, THEN...
Uh-
I mean ...
How is Caihong's condition?
STOP...

Ah right, you'd lived with him for a long time.
... Well
After correcting the feed composition according to the instructions left by Ran
Both his plumes and physical condition have returned to how they were.
Now, if he could at least adapt to his new environment
They wouldn't treat him harshly anymore.
He is *the* Zhen after all.
... Still
I suppose that's quite a challenge in itself.
... Indeed.
He is used to being spoiled at home and all.
Thanks to Ran-sama.

...
Um... Fei-sama.
CLENCH...


Couldn't you continue to take care of Caihong?


"Fei was an excellent Zhen master" ...
was what Ran-sama used to say.
I will do no such thing!

KLIK...
I don't know what you've bought into.
But being a Zhen master never suited me.
I also failed in bringing out the feather colours.

Right now, I'm only lending them a hand.
Someone will have to replace me soon.

Ran and I...
We are different.
…In any case I've sworn to myself not to raise another Zhen.
And for that I even left this place-
Hm?
Oh, this?
This was once the cane that Ran-sama used.
LIFT!
That rod has certainly seen better days.
What's it for?

Because of that...
He couldn't stand on his own legs then.
You know
From when he suffered from ague.
KLAK!

...
Cai-hong.
KREAK

I want to ask you some-thing.
...
I'm coming in.
Aren't you quiet?
Don't you cry at night here?
...
Even if I do, only those men who carry whips will come.
...
Is that so.
BAM!

FWUMP!
SWSH
CLATTER!
START!
...RUSTLE
I'm unarmed.
...
It's fine like this, isn't it?

I won't do anything to you.
And if I get on your nerves at all
THUD!
You can sink your fangs anywhere you like.
I just want to talk about something ...
TAP

... Then
Shall we test your courage?
SHP.
If you can truly *stay still*
until dawn breaks, without any kind of resistance
I will keep you company and talk as much as you like.
NUDGE

And after this
I won't make any more selfish demands.
Do we have a deal?

GRAB!

...
Do as you like.

LICK!
DRIP...
SLURP...
...
n...
Chu
Chu
Chu
TWITCH

As good as dead.
SLIDE...
...
Hey.
SHLUP!
Is this how you're going to test my courage ...?
Isn't it thrilling?
If I somehow bite you with these fangs, you will be...
...
Well··· Whose fault is it that I haven't had any free time?
Fufu
What's this?
For someone who always acts all composed
Aren't you getting hard because of *me*?
RUB
RUB

My mate? You?
You telling me to die?
That's not funny.
Then I'll take responsibility.
Shall I be your mate?
...
I get it.
This is payback for everything up till now, isn't it?
...
I've changed ever since *that time*.
There is this unbearable heat smouldering within me.
And so
Somewhere within my heart, began I to dream of becoming somebody's pair.
RUB
RUB

What am I deluding myself into
When such a thing is impossible for me.
...
...
It's not like
I can become your female pair, right?
...
...

SQUIRM
SQUIRM
What'll you do if you go in rut?
...
...
...SNUGGLE
Here, let me help you.
It's alright. It's my defeat.

Your... hand ...
I won't... bite...
...
... H-
Ah... h...
SHUDDER!
Nh!
...ah ...
TWITCH
TWITCH
SHLP SHLOP
GRAB!
GNMM
You
Do you perhaps like 'hands'?
YANK
...

Ran often stroked me with his hand.
SLIP...
...
When I was praised for my beautiful plumes.
...When I was fed, or when my clothes were changed.
...Or when I seemed lonely.
... Always, that 'hand' alighted on me.
... I see.
... There's no way I'd hate it, right?

It'd be bad if you become poisoned.
Clean yourself well.
I'd do that even without being told by you.
You don't have to be worried.
Also
It's fine if you don't come from tomorrow on.
...

?
Why?
While I'm free I can still come.
...You are busy, aren't you?
I won't say any more wilful things.
I am satisfied now that I got to feel your hand so.
You took care of Ran, didn't you?
...
Hey.

I heard about it today.
You see, since he seemed to manage by himself just fine
if it wasn't for the cane, people around him wouldn't have noticed his condition
Thanks to this...
Cai-hong,
he would always do things to help Ran-sama
Like lending him a shoulder,
or fetching things for him.
Both at home
and
outside.

I didn't even know that Ran's leg had become bad
Because I was always away
...I didn't know anything.
GRIT
...
I'm sorry.
I-
...
...
I'M STILL THE ONE WHO KILLED HIM, AREN'T I ?!
...So what?
I-

THm
THm
General Fei
Are you in there, sir?!
TH
M
There's a raid!!
By the group at the western border!
Sir, please give us your com-mand-
I'm going!

...
Damn it!
THP!
Now of all times.
KLAK
...
Cai-hong.
CLENCH!
...
Do you want to come out?

At such a time
I *could* carelessly forget to lock the door...
Well?
FLIP

I don't know how to live in the wild.
I can't even dress myself.
I can't do anything.
Impos-sible.
I don't have 'hands'.
I can only remain *here*.
I
...
I under-stand.
TMP!

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I have decided to omit the translation of the Chinese words that the author wrote/drew and leave them there just like that. I did try to ask some people who know Chinese, but even for them it was hard to figure out what all those Chinese words/sounds actually mean

Tranquil Melancholy